

# Lemon

## History

The true origin of lemons is not entirely known. They are thought to have originated in north-western India. It is known that lemons were introduced to southern Italy around 200 AD and have been cultivated in Egypt and Iran since 700 AD. Arabs spread lemons throughout the Mediterranean area during the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century.



When Christopher Columbus left Europe for the New World in 1492, he brought with him lemon seeds. These seeds were planted in Hispaniola in 1493. Spaniard explorers and missionaries planted lemons, along with other fruits, in Florida and California. Florida lemons suffered a major setback when a massive freeze destroyed crops in 1886. Commercial lemon crops in Florida were not attempted again until the 1950's.

## Fun facts

- During the reign King Louis XIV of France, ladies used lemons to redden their lips
- All British ships were equipped with lemons and limes to prevent the sailors from developing scurvy
- California, Arizona, and Florida are the United States leading producers of lemons
- There are three main types of lemons – acidic, rough, and sweet
- Lemon trees can grow for 150 years

## Fruit Science

Scurvy is a disease caused by a lack of vitamin C in the foods you eat. It was commonly seen by sailors and pirates who would be without fruit and vegetables for months at a time while on the open seas. A physician in the British Royal Navy proved that scurvy could be treated and prevented with citrus fruits. After this discovery, all British ships were stocked with a supply of citrus fruit. During the California gold rush, miners' diets were poor and food was scarce and scurvy was on the rise. Additional lemon trees were planted in California to prevent the disease. Interestingly, scurvy is not seen in most animals because they are capable of producing vitamin C. Humans and primates must rely on the foods that they eat to prevent a deficiency from



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